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EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES

AVENGERS®

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THE CROSSING

IT IS WELL PAST MIDNIGHT...

...WHEN THE WOMAN CALLED MAGDALENE WAKES UP.

PHILIP!?

WAS IT THE MOONLIGHT STREAMING IN THE WINDOW...

...OR SOMETHING MORE?

PHILIP?

BUT HE DOES NOT ANSWER AS HE HEADS INTO THE WOODS.

THE ONLY SOUND IS THAT OF THE NIGHT WIND RUSTLING THE SUMMER LEAVES.

HOW FAR--AND LONG--HE WALKS...

...HE CANNOT TELL.

ALL HE KNOWS IS THAT HE MUST FOLLOW THE BEACON ON THE WIND...

...AS IT CALLS HIM INTO...

...THE GLADE.

STAN LEE PRESENTS A TALE OF THE MIGHTY AVENGERS

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

BOB HARRAS & TERRY KAVANAGH
STORY
BOB HARRAS - SCRIPT
MIKE DEODATO - PENCILER
TOM PALMER - FINISHES AND COLOR
MALIBU - COLOR SEPARATIONS
OAKLEY / NJQ - LETTERERS
RALPH MACCHIO - EDITOR
MARK GRUENWALD - CHIEF

SEE, ELDER?

I TOLD YOU HE WOULD COME.

IS HE NOT *VERY* LIKE THE ONE YOU LOST?

YOU...?

YOU'RE THE BOY CALLED *TUC.*

WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE!? WHO ARE--!?

SILENCE. YOUR QUESTIONS ARE IRRELEVANT. YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED TO SERVE A *PURPOSE* GREATER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.

YOU WHO CALLS HIMSELF *SWORDSMAN* MUST JOURNEY TO THE PLACE THE HEROES GATHER--

--AND ASK THEM THIS--WHO MOURNS FOR *AGAPHAUR?*

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ONE HUNDRED ODD MILES TO THE SOUTH...

...NEW YORK CITY.

SPECIFICALLY, THE HOME OF EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES, THE AVENGERS MANSION.

WHERE THREE OF THAT NUMBER...

...HERCULES, THE PRINCE OF POWER...

...HENRY PYM, CALLED GIANT-MAN...

...AND NATASHA ROMANOVA, THE ACROBATIC BLACK WIDOW...

...CONFRONT THE DEATH OF ONE OF THEIR OWN.

BY ZEUS'S BLOOD, HANK!

IS THERE *NOTHING* YOU CAN DO FOR HIM!?

BELIEVE ME, HERK--I WISH TO HEAVEN THERE WAS.

BUT *GILGAMESH* IS SUFFERING A *TOTAL* BIO-CELLULAR COLLAPSE.

THE PAIN HE'S ENDURING MUST BE *INDESCRIBABLE*-- AND NOTHING I DO SEEMS TO BE ABLE TO STOP IT!

ARRRGH!

N-NEVER SHOULD HAVE *TRAINED* HIM-- TAUGHT HIM *ALL* I KNOW--

--HE AND HIS FAMILY ARE TOO *DANGEROUS*...

...TOO *DEADLY!*

WHO, GILAGMESH!?

WHO IS TOO DEADLY? WHO DID THIS TO YOU!?

HERK, HE'S DELIRIOUS. YOU WON'T GET A RESPONSE.

THIS IS INSANITY! GILGAMESH IS AN ETERNAL-- THEY DO NOT AGE. THEY DO NOT DIE!

THE SCANNERS DON'T LIE.

AND THEY INDICATE THE DETERIORATION IS ACCELERATING. HE WON'T LAST THROUGH THE NIGHT.

I'M SORRY.

THIS EVENING STARTED OUT SO HAPPILY. IT WAS THE ANNIVERSARY OF OUR FOUNDING--

--THEN THIS.

AND NOW WE DISCOVER, MARILLA IS MISSING...

"MY FRIENDS, I HAVE A *VERY* BAD FEELING ABOUT THAT."

HE IS CALLED THE *VISION.*

A *SYNTHEZOID,* AN ARTIFICIAL MAN WITH PLASTIC FLESH AND METALLIC NEURONS. A BEING WITH THE ABILITY TO TURN INTANGIBLE AT WILL.

HE FLOATS NOW, BIO-SCANNER IN HAND, BETWEEN THE WALLS AND FLOORS OF THE MANSION SEARCHING FOR SOME CLUE AS TO THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE MISSING MARILLA...

...THE AVENGERS' NANNY WHO DISAPPEARED ON A MINOR ERRAND TO RETRIEVE AN ERRANT DOLL.

THE VISION HAS ONLY RECENTLY REGAINED THE CAPACITY TO FEEL EMOTIONS.

THE DISQUIETING EVENTS OF THIS NIGHT MAKES HIM ALMOST WISH HE HADN'T.

CRYSTAL--

--I'M SCARED.

I KNOW, DC. I KNOW.

WE'RE *ALL* SCARED. IT'S BEEN A *TERRIBLE* NIGHT.

WHERE COULD SHE BE? MARILLA WOULD *NEVER* LEAVE *LUNA* ALONE LIKE THIS!

SHE'D NEVER LEAVE *ANY* OF US LIKE THIS.

Y-YOU DON'T THINK--

--SOME-THING... Y'KNOW... *BAD*--

--HAPPENED TO HER?

DEEP WITHIN THE CONTAINING WALL OF SUB-BASEMENT DELTA--

--THE BIO-SCANNER SOUNDS.

AND THE VISION PAUSES.

PIETRO!

HAVE YOU FOUND *ANYTHING* YET?

ZWOOSH

NO. I'VE BEEN AROUND THE CITY *TWICE.* THERE'S NO SIGN OF HER.

WE CAN ONLY PRAY THE VISION'S HAD MORE LUCK.

DA-DA, I WAN' RILLA!

WE *ALL* DO, MY SWEET LUNA.

JARVIS.

SUMMON THE WIDOW AND THE REST OF THE AVENGERS.

THE VISION!

RISING OUT OF THE FLOOR!

VISION, YOU KNOW SOMETHING, DON'T YOU?

IS MARILLA ALL RIGHT!?

VISION-- SAY SOMETHING!

MARILLA IS PRACTICALLY A MEMBER OF MY FAMILY!

uhh--JARV, DO AS THE MAN SAYS-- QUICK

I'M ON MY WAY, MS. DEATHCRY.

VIZH, YOU'RE SCARING US. WHAT DID YOU FIND!?

DEATHCRY...

...I THINK IT BEST TO WAIT FOR THE OTHERS.

IT IS NOT PLEASANT NEWS.

SEVERAL BLOCKS TO THE EAST...

...AT THE OFFICES OF THE PRES-TIGIOUS LAW FIRM OF GALSWORTHY, FORSYTE AND SOAMES...

...JANET VAN DYNE, ONCE THE WONDROUS **WASP**, ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE MIGHTY AVENGERS...

...HAS ANSWERED AN URGENT SUMMONS FROM HER ATTORNEY.

THIS HAD BETTER BE REALLY, *REALLY* IMPORTANT, *LIAM.*

THERE'S A LOT OF WEIRD THINGS GOING ON AT THE MANSION.

JANET, I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION "WEIRD THINGS" WERE *ALWAYS* GOING ON WITH THE AVENGERS.

BUT I ASSURE YOU, WHAT I DISCOVERED *IS* IMPORTANT AND NOT A LITTLE *UNNERVING.*

AS YOU KNOW, I PROMISED YOU I WOULD INVESTIGATE THE MYSTERY OF YOUR FINANCIAL COLLAPSE TO THE FULLEST OF MY ABILITIES.

THE PAPER TRAIL WAS *SURPRISINGLY* EASY TO PICK UP AND TRACE TO ITS SOURCE.

BUT I SHOULD WARN YOU, YOU WON'T LIKE IT.

LIAM, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I'M ALL GROWN UP NOW. I CAN *TAKE* BAD NEWS.

PUNCH UP THE NAME.

sigh.

VERY WELL, THEN.

WHAT!?

I DON'T *BELIEVE IT! WHY!?* WHY WOULD HE *DO* THIS TO ME!?

THE AVENGER MED-LAB.

HANK, YOU'VE BEEN EXAMINING THE VISION'S DISCOVERY FOR NEARLY AN HOUR.

CAN YOU *CONFIRM* HIS SUSPICIONS?

THEY ARE MORE THAN MERE SUSPICIONS, NATASHA.

OUR BIO-SCANNERS WERE CALIBRATED SPECIFICALLY TO PICK UP MARILLA'S DNA PATTERN.

I AM AFRAID SOMETHING UNIQUE IN OUR HISTORY HAS OCCURRED HERE TONIGHT.

A MURDER.

HE'S RIGHT, TASHA.

THE ORGANIC RESIDUE THE VISION FOUND IN THE MAINTENANCE SHAFT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE REMAINS OF A VICTIM OF A HIGH-INTENSITY PLASMA BLAST.

AND THE *DNA* SEQUENCING MATCHES MARILLA'S.

SOMEONE *KILLED* HER, MADAME CHAIRMAN--AND THEN TRIED TO *HIDE* THE EVIDENCE.

BUT-- *MARILLA!?*

IT DOESN'T MAKE *ANY* SENSE!

SHE WORKED FOR A MEMBER OF THE INHUMANS' ROYAL FAMILY AND WE *KNOW* THE *INHUMANS'* HAVE BEEN GOING THROUGH A ROCKY TIME POLITICALLY--

WHAT'S THIS?

YOU'VE NOTICED SOMETHING, HENRY?

SOME SORT OF ANOMALY. IT *MUST* BE A *GLITCH* IN THE SYSTEM.

WHY DON'T YOU GUYS GO AND COMFORT THE OTHERS? I'LL WORK WITH THIS HERE.

THERE'S PRECIOUS LITTLE COMFORT AVAILABLE TONIGHT, DOCTOR.

I HEAR YOU, HERK. I HEAR YOU.

AND IN THE AFTER-MATH...

...THERE CAN ONLY BE SILENCE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS.

I DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT.

HOW CAN SHE BE DEAD? CAN SOMEONE PLEASE TELL ME HOW?

IT ISN'T FAIR.

W--WOULD ANYONE LIKE SOME TEA?

IN TIMES LIKE THIS, I--I'VE FOUND IT CAN BE A GREAT...

...COMFORT.

I DOUBT A BEVERAGE WILL EASE OUR PAIN, JARVIS.

O-OF COURSE, SIR.

STILL, I'LL PUT A POT UP.

STAY, JARVIS.

YOU HAVE SUFFERED A LOSS AS WELL.

YOU SHOULD BE HERE WITH YOUR FRIENDS. WITH US.

TH-THANK YOU, SIR.

AVENGERS!

I--I DON'T QUITE BELIEVE THIS MYSELF--

--BUT I WENT OVER THE SAMPLE AGAIN, AND FOUND THE REMAINS OF *ANOTHER* VICTIM. *THAT* WAS THE ANOMALY THE SCANNER PICKED UP!

ANOTHER DEATH? BUT WHO--!?

I DON'T KNOW HOW BUT THE GENETIC MARKERS SUGGESTS RITA DeMARA, THE WOMAN WHO ADOPTED MY *YELLOWJACKET* PERSONA.

TWO MURDERS!?

THERE IS A *CURSE* ON US THIS NIGHT, MY FRIENDS.

AHHR

TRRR!

THAT *CRY* CAME FROM UPSTAIRS-- *GILGAMESH!*

PIETRO-- GET UP THERE-- *FAST!*

ON MY--

--WAY!

DEAR GOD!

YOU'RE A *HARD* ONE TO KILL, ALL RIGHT.

I CAN SEE WHY THE YOUNG ONES HAD DIFFICULTY *FINISHING* YOU OFF.

STILL, THE FAMILY HAS *ORDERED* YOUR DEATH--

--AND I'VE *YET* TO *FAIL* MY *MASTERS!*

SSSSSSSS!

ARGH!

GET AWAY FROM HIM!

AND NOW THE OTHER ASSEMBLERS ARRIVE.

tsk, tsk!

ah. THE SPEEDSTER AVENGER.

IMPRESSIVE YOUTH, BUT NEUT IS FASTER STILL!

CRAK!

UHNN!

TOOM!

WHAT'S THIS!? NOW THE SIZE-SHIFTING PYM SEEKS TO STOP ME--

GILGAMESH, FOR THE FAMILY'S SAKE, YOU SHOULD HAVE DIED EASILY.

BUT YOU ALWAYS WERE A STUBBORN FOOL, OLD MASTER.

--ONLY TO BE DISAPPOINTED, eh?

NEUT WILL NOT BE STOPPED, GIANT ONE. HIS JOB IS DONE!

CRUNCH!

"DONE"!?

YOU CAN'T MEAN--

RANDAC'S BLOOD!

HIS SKIN IS AS COLD AS ICE! WE'RE TOO LATE!

HERCULES--
LOOK OUT!

ARRGH!!!

FOOLS!

I'VE NOT SERVED MY LORD AND LADY *THIS* LONG TO BE BROUGHT DOWN BY THE LIKES OF YOU!

HE'S IN *SHOCK!*

IF I USE MY ELEMENTAL POWERS TO WARM THE AIR AROUND HIM, THERE MAY STILL BE A CHANCE!

N--NO, AVENGER. DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME ON ME.

I CAME HERE TO W-WARN YOU ALL--BUT THEY WERE *TOO* CLEVER. TH-THEY WERE LYING IN W-WAIT TO AMBUSH ME.*

SHE *HATES* YOU ALL--AS MUCH AS SHE LOVES *POWER.*

AND HER SONS ARE MORE EVIL STILL--*BEWARE* THEM--

--THEY MEAN TO DESTROY YOU. THERE IS *SO* MUCH YOU DO NOT KNOW...BUT THEIR PLANS ARE ALREADY BEARING FRUIT.

AND WITH A SUDDEN RASPING BREATH...

...THE BEING CALLED GILGAMESH, THE ETERNAL WARRIOR, WHO HAS WALKED THIS EARTH SINCE NEAR THE DAWN OF MAN'S EXISTENCE, PASSES FROM THIS WORLD.

AND IN HIS WAKE, COMES THE CRY OF TRIUMPH!

HE IS DEAD! I HAVE ACCOMPLISHED MY MISSION! WHAT A FOOL HE WAS TO THINK HE COULD DEFY MY LORD AND LADY!

AND YOU WILL MEET THEM SOON ENOUGH, HEROES! OH, YES YOU SHALL!

SHRAK!

COUNT ON IT!

WITH ONE SIMPLE MOVEMENT, NEUT POUNDS HIS STAFF ON TO THE BIO-CENTER'S FLOOR--

--CLEAVING IT ASUNDER--

--AS HE DOES FLOOR AFTER FLOOR--

--FALLING EVER DEEPER INTO THE ABYSS--

--UNTIL HE REACHES THE BASEMENT.

AND THERE HE STOPS.

BUT HE HAS NOT COME ALONE.

SO, YOU HEAD TOWARD THE MYSTERIOUS DOOR.

I SUSPECTED AS MUCH.

WHA--!?

ah, THE SEPULCHRAL ANDROID.

THE *ABOMINATION.*

YOU HAVE *MUCH* TO PAY FOR, VISION. YOU AND YOUR MUTANT BRIDE.

YOU ARE OUT OF TOUCH, CREATURE. THE **SCARLET WITCH** AND I LONG AGO PARTED COMPANY.

AND *THAT* ABSOLVES YOU OF ANCIENT SINS? I THINK NOT.

YOU, MORE THAN ANY OF THEM--

--HAVE NO IDEA--

--WHAT AND WHO IS COMING!

STAND BACK--WHERE I GO, YOU CANNOT FOLLOW!

CLANG!

CLOSED.

AND ONCE MORE--MY POWERS ARE USELESS AGAINST THIS BARRIER.

LATER THAT EVENING...

...ON INTER-CONTINENTAL LINK-UP WITH AVENGERS' FOUNDER, ANTHONY STARK...

I'VE MADE MY DECISION, TONY.

THREE PEOPLE HAVE DIED IN THIS HOUSE TONIGHT. THE DOOR IS NO LONGER A CURIOSITY TO BE STUDIED AT OUR LEISURE.

IT IS A THREAT, THAT HAS CAUSED US MORE DAMAGE IN ONE EVENING THAN IN ALL THE TIME SINCE THE AVENGERS WERE FORMED.

IT'S SIMPLY TOO DANGEROUS TO STAY HERE. AS SUCH, I'M ORDERING THE TOTAL EVACUATION OF THE MANSION EFFECTIVE NOW.

THIS IS INCREDIBLE!

I WAS JUST THERE WITH ALL OF YOU A FEW SHORT HOURS AGO! BUT I AGREE WITH YOUR DECISION, NATASHA.

I'LL RETURN TO NEW YORK IMMEDIATELY TO HELP SECURE THE MANSION.

LUNA--WHAT IS IT, BABY?

BAD MAN! BAD MAN!

I KNOW, SWEETIE. BUT WE'RE GOING FAR, FAR AWAY--WHERE HE WON'T EVER FIND US.

BUT THE CHILD LUNA ONLY LOOKS UP AT THE SCREEN--AND WHIMPERS.

IN ALL MY DAYS HERE, I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD COME TO THIS, MISS.

I KNOW, JARVIS.

BUT WE'VE NEVER FACED *ANYTHING*--

"--LIKE THIS--"

"--BEFORE."

AND IN THE DARKENED SHADOWS OF THE EMPTY HOUSE--

--ONE COULD ALMOST HEAR (IF THERE WERE ANYONE LEFT TO HEAR)--

--THE SOUND OF A WOMAN'S MOCKING LAUGHTER.

TO BE CONTINUED IN **IRON MAN** #321 --AND NEXT MONTH IN **AVENGERS** #392! BE HERE--THE SURPRISES HAVE **JUST** BEGUN!

ZONE